
Guide to the

DARR EQUIPMENT CO. COLLECTION 1954-2002

4.5 linear ft.

Accession Numbers: 0102-153 and 0102-270

Collection Number: 36

**Prepared by Kevin Kendro
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CITATION: Darr Equipment Co. Collection, Collection 36, Box number, Folder number, Irving Archives, Irving Public Library.

Historical Sketch

On January 1, 1954, Hal S. Darr purchased the R. B. George Equipment Company, a Caterpillar diesel tractor dealership for north and east Texas. Caterpillar Inc. is a major manufacturer of construction and mining equipment, engines, and turbines. The new dealership, Darr Equipment Co., opened with 76 employees and three locations: Dallas, Wichita Falls, and Gladewater.

During that same year, Darr began construction on a new corporate office and service center in Irving, Texas. The new facility was formally opened on November 13, 1954. On June 21, 1954, Hal S. Darr died, leaving operation of the company to his sons-in-law Bob Engstrom, President, and Joe Wagner, Executive Vice-President.

Throughout the 1950s and 1960s, Darr Equipment Co. expanded, opening branch offices in Waco (1955), and Texarkana (1964); and added a mobile field service fleet (1963). In 1965, Caterpillar opened a regional parts distribution center in Irving. Darr became the first Caterpillar dealer to be awarded a Cat Lift Truck franchise in 1966. In 1968, the Gladewater branch office was moved to Longview and a parts shuttle service between Darr stores and the Caterpillar parts depot was begun.

During the 1970s, the Wichita Falls branch and the Irving service department shop were expanded; a Darr Engine Power Center was opened in Irving (1978), and a branch office was opened in Ft. Worth (1979). Joe Wagner, Executive Vice President and company co-owner since 1954, left Darr in 1976 to assume control of the Caterpillar dealership for Colorado.

Expansion continued into the 1980s and 1990s. In 1981, a Tyler branch was opened, and Darr acquired Diversified Equipment Fabrication Company in Kilgore, Texas. In 1986, Bob Engstrom was elected chairman of the board, and his son Randy Engstrom became president

of Darr Equipment Co.

In 1990, Darr Equipment Co. acquired the assets of the Albert Equipment Company and was made the authorized Caterpillar dealer for 76 counties in Oklahoma. Darr added branches in seven Oklahoma locations including Oklahoma City and Tulsa. By the mid-1990s, Darr had grown to 16 facilities and approximately 1,000 employees.

In April of 2002, Holt Cat, the Caterpillar dealer for south and central Texas, purchased Darr Equipment Co. making Holt one of the largest Caterpillar dealers in the world.

Sources:

Darr Equipment Co. collection, Collection 36, Irving Archives, Irving Public Library.

Series Description

Series I. Histories, 1954-2000. 5 linear inches. (1 manuscript box).

Information on the history of Darr Equipment Co., Caterpillar Inc., and road paving.

Series II. Darr Employee Development and Customer Service Programs, 1960s-2001. 7 linear inches. (1.3 manuscript boxes).

Information on Darr Equipment Co. programs designed to enhance employee performance and customer service.

Series III. Correspondence, 1976-2000. 1 linear inch (1 folder).

A small amount of correspondence pertaining to everyday activities at the company.

Series IV. Publications, 1954-2002. 1.4 linear ft. (3.3 manuscript boxes)

Darr Equipment Co. publications and industry publications.

Series V. Photographs and Slides, 1954-2000. 10 linear inches (2 manuscript boxes).

Photos of Darr locations, employees, equipment, and company related events.

Series VI. Artifacts. 10 linear inches (2 manuscript box).

Darr promotional material, such as caps and playing cards, etc.

Scope and Content Note

The Darr Equipment Co. Collection are contained in 10 manuscript boxes with two Caterpillar Inc. oversize advertisements placed in Irving Archives Oversize Box 4 and a plaque with a model tractor attached to it placed in Irving Archives Artifact Box 1. The collection is arranged in six series.

Series I is made up of documents and publications relating to the history of Darr Equipment Co., the history of Caterpillar Inc., and the history of paving and paving machinery. Notes in the files indicated that the files in this series were maintained as the company's historical archives. Darr was a Caterpillar dealership and was closely connected with Caterpillar Inc., so many publications dealing with the history of Caterpillar are also found in this series. The series also includes material put together for and used during the company's anniversary celebrations throughout the years.

Series II consists of a number of presentations and programs designed to promote

employee development and customer service. Among the material in the series are a telephone skills workbook, a slide show and script describing Darr and its services, and a presentation introducing the “Darr Difference,” a customer service program.

Series III is made up of a small amount of correspondence that was scattered throughout the collection. It is day-to-day internal communications and courtesy letters to and from customers.

Series IV, the largest series in the collection, is made up of newsletters, pamphlets, magazines, clippings, and books relating to Darr Equipment Co., Caterpillar Inc., and industry topics. A large portion of the series consists of copies of the Darr Equipment Co. publication the Darr Viewer, which was the company’s in-house magazine. The series contains a complete run of the Darr Viewer from 1965-2002. The news clippings have been photocopied onto acid-free paper.

Series V consists of photographs, slides, and negatives. The photos are primarily from company trips and awards banquets, but also included, among other subjects, are photos of the softball team and portraits of many of the company secretaries taken in the 1960s. One group of slides is from a Darr presentation entitled “The Darr Difference.” These slides were in a carousel when received. They have been removed from the carousel and placed in archival slide sleeves and labeled as the slide presentation. Some of the slides were in plastic slide boxes marked by subject, such as Oklahoma City, or Tulsa. Other slides were bundled together by rubber band with no identification. All of the slides were placed in archival slide sheets. Each sheet contains only the slides that were in the original box or bundle. The sheets were labeled with the original identification when it was known. The photographs, when received, were in envelopes or sleeves containing a brief description of the contents. The photos were placed in acid-free file folders and the folders were given the name that was on the original envelope or sleeve.

Series VI is made up of artifacts, consisting of Darr promotional materials such as playing cards, caps, and decals.

This collection provides a good overall view of the founding and history of the Darr Equipment Co. and its relationship with Caterpillar Inc. The complete run of the Darr Viewer gives a look into the company’s culture and its growth and changes through the years.

Except for the files marked as history files, the collection had no particular arrangement when it was donated to the Irving Archives. The processing archivist determined the arrangement.

Provenance Statement

The Darr Equipment Co. Collection were donated to the Irving Archives by Darr Equipment Co. Mr. Randy Engstrom was president of the company at the time of donation, and the transfer was handled by Mr. Gary Tong of Darr Equipment Co. representing the owners, their immediate families, and heirs. The material, accession numbers 0102-153 and 0102-270, were donated to the Irving Archives in March 2002 and July 2002. Prior to their donation to the Archives, the material was in possession of Darr Equipment Co.

Literary Rights Statement

Permission to publish from the Darr Equipment Co. Collection must be obtained from the Irving Archives, Irving Public Library.

Container List

Series I. Histories

Box 1

Folder

- 1 Darr History, 1950's
Contains invitations, announcements, articles and promotional material regarding Darr's founding and its early years in business.
- 2 Darr History, 1950s-2000
Contains facts and statistics about Darr and chronologies of Darr history.
- 3 Darr History, n.d.
Contains a genealogical chart titled "The Descendants of Hal S. Darr;" promotional material entitled "More Than Just a Family Business, It's a Business Family!" a brief history of the company; and a promotional flier describing some of the company's achievements in the 1990s.
- 4 Darr History, Anniversaries, 1974, 1979, 1984, 1994
Contains material used for and relating to the 20th through 40th Darr Equipment Co. anniversaries.
- 5 Darr History, 1970s-1980s
Contains information on some of the Darr branch locations; primarily information on sign placement for and construction of the Texarkana location.
- 6 Caterpillar Inc. History
Contains the typescript of an article and the printed article titled "The History of Caterpillar;" a special issue of Caterpillar World, a Caterpillar Inc. publication, marking the company's 100th year in business; and a Caterpillar chronology, 1904-1958.
- 7 Caterpillar Inc. History
Contains a packet of Caterpillar news releases and photos relating to new products and the Caterpillar factory, 1970s.
- 8 Caterpillar History - Holt Brothers Tractor Sketches
Contains sketches of early Holt Brothers tractors, 1900s-1920s.
- 9 History of Paving
Contains information and publications on paving equipment and the history of paving.

Series II. Darr Employee Development and Customer Service Programs

Box 2

Folder

1 Darr Equipment Co.'s CAT Plus Services Program

Contains a packet of information on the company's CAT Plus Services program. This material was originally contained in a three-ring binder and has been transferred to an acid-free folder.

2 Darr Equipment Co.'s CAT Plus Services Program

Contains a packet of information on the company's CAT Plus Services program. This file contains primarily the same information as Box 2, Folder 1 with slight variations. It was originally contained in a three-ring binder and was transferred to an acid-free folder.

3 "The Darr Difference" Program

Contains a packet of information on "The Darr Difference" customer service program. This material was originally contained in a three-ring binder and was transferred to an acid-free folder.

4 "This is Darr" Presentation

Script and overhead projector sheets used for the presentation "This is Darr" detailing Darr's locations and product support programs. This material was originally contained in a three-ring binder and was transferred to an acid-free folder.

5 Commitment to Excellence Program, 2001

Details Darr's employee development, motivational, and recognition programs, such as the Personal Learning Module; also contains a number of issues of the Darr Viewer. This material was originally contained in a three-ring binder and was transferred to an acid-free folder.

6 President's Council on Excellence

Booklet detailing a program to recognize employees for excellent customer service.

7 Conexpo '69 Training Package, 1969

Information packet, including slides, designed to brief dealers on what was on display and what was new among competitors at Conexpo '69.

8 Product Nomenclature Training Program

Contains a presentation on the evolution of the naming of Caterpillar products, including two scripts, one heavily notated; slides, and Caterpillar product line catalogues.

9 Darr Telephone Skills Workbook

10 Employee Suggestion Program

Suggestion forms and details of the ESP program, the Employee Suggestion Program.

Box 3

1 Customer Service Information

Information on Darr customer service programs in the form of printed fliers, suggestion forms, and company history.

2 Personal Learning Modules, 1988-2001

Three-part forms containing information about the company, quizzes about the company for a company contest, and a blank suggestion form.

3 Employee Development Packet

Contains copies of many different Darr publications and information about Darr Equipment Co. When received, this file was marked as the "employee development master copy file."

4 Employee Development Packet

Contains copies of many different Darr publications and information on employee programs and customer service programs.

Series III. Correspondence, 1976-2000

5 Correspondence, 1976-2000

Contains a few pieces of correspondence concerning day-to-day company operations. The file also contains a certificate of appreciation from the City of Irving for Darr's support of Irving's participation in the 2001 All-American City Campaign.

Series IV. Publications

6 Darr Publications, 1960s-1990s

Contains three Darr Equipment Company newsletters, n. d.; two Darr Power Systems newsletters, n. d.; four Darr Equipment Company promotional brochures, n. d; two issues of Darr Equipment Company Powerwise, Sept./Oct. 1966 and Jan./Feb. 1967; and three issues of the Darr Hand, 1997-1999.

7 Darr Publications, 1996-1997

Contains issues of Darr's quarterly newspaper Customer Connection, 1996-1997.

8 Darr Publications, 1998-2001

Contains issues of Darr's quarterly newspaper Customer Connection, 1998-2001.

9 Darr Publication, The Darr Times Record, 1984

Contains two copies of a retrospective newspaper published as part of Darr's 30th anniversary celebration.

10 Caterpillar Publications, 1950s-1990s

Contains pages from a Caterpillar product line publication, c. 1950s; a Caterpillar parts reference catalogue, 1965; a TEPS News-Total Engine Product Support newsletter, March-April 1975; the dealer, a Caterpillar publication for its dealers which contains an article on Darr's management style, Sept. 1976; a special edition of Caterpillar World magazine in honor of Caterpillar's centennial year, 1984; Caterpillar Product Line brochures, 1992 and 1993.

11 Industry Publications, 1976 and 1991

big a Goodyear Tire and Rubber Company publication containing an article about Darr, 1976; and 75 Years of Innovation-The Story of Barber-Greene, 1991.

Box 4

Bound Volume - Darr Viewer, 1965-1977

Bound Volume - Darr Viewer, Jan. 1978-Aug. 1986

- 1 Darr Viewer, Sept. 1986-Dec. 1987
- 2 Darr Viewer, Jan. 1988-Dec. 1989
- 3 Darr Viewer, Jan. 1990-Dec. 1991

Box 5

- 1 Darr Viewer, Jan. 1992-Dec. 1993
- 2 Darr Viewer, Jan. 1994-Dec. 1995
- 3 Darr Viewer, Jan. 1996-Dec. 1997
- 4 Darr Viewer, Jan. 1998-Dec. 1999
- 5 Darr Viewer, Jan 2000-Dec. 2001, and a commemorative final issue from 2002.
- 6 Newspaper clippings, 1970s

Box 6

Books: Caterpillar Parts Service Barometer, 1963-1964 and Caterpillar Parts Service Barometer, 1965-66. These volumes are bound, monthly, inventory reports and sales reports for Caterpillar products at Darr Equipment Co.

Our First Five Decades, 1966, published by the Barber-Greene Company.

The Caterpillar Story, 1991, published by Caterpillar Inc.

The History of Hot Mix Asphalt--A Century of Progress, 1992, published by the National Asphalt Pavement Association.

Caterpillar--Farm Tractors, Bulldozers and Heavy Machinery, 1994, Randy Leffingwell, published by Motorbooks International.

Series V. Photographs and Slides

Box 7

Note: The photos in folders 1, 2 and 3 were in a single folder when received and appear to have been selected for use in various Darr publications. Many of them do appear in publications. The processing archivist arranged them in three folders by the following subjects; personnel, Darr locations; and equipment.

1 Photos--Personnel, 1950s-1980s (bulk 1950s)

2 Photos--Darr Locations, 1950s and 1970s (bulk 1950s)

3 Photos--Equipment, 1910s-1950s

4 Photos--The Darr Times Record, 1984

These photos were used in the commemorative retrospective newspaper issue The Darr Times Record, which was put out as part of the company's 30th anniversary celebration in 1984.

5 Photos--Location exteriors, 1950s-1990s

Exteriors of various Darr offices among them; Irving, Waco, and the original building in Dallas.

6 Photos--Customer Trip, Conexpo '69, 1969

Contains photos from the Conexpo '69 trip: photos of the display floor and of participants boarding a plane at the airport. The negatives are in Box 8, Folder 1.

7 Photos--Customer Trip #1, March 1971

Contains photos and proof sheets of people boarding an airplane and at the airport. Good photos of a Texas International jet. The negatives are in Box 8, Folder 2.

8 Photos--Customer Trip #2, n.d.

Contains proof sheet of people in meetings. The negatives are in Box 8, Folder 9.

9 Photos--Customer Trip #3, n.d.

Contains several copies of a photo of men posing around a Texas International jet. The negatives are of men around the airplane and men at the conference, c. early 1970s. The negatives are in Box 8, Folder 3.

10 Photos--Phoenix Seminar, 1970

Contains photos of men posing next to a Texas International propeller-driven airplane. The negatives are in Box 8, Folder 9.

11 Photos--Darr Function, n.d.

Contains photos of people in classes and at a company luncheon, c. 1990s.

12 Photos--Employee Recognition Banquet, 1968

Photos taken at 1968 awards banquet. These include: a photo of the crowd listening to a band; Joe Wagner and R. H. Engstrom presenting Lee White with his 15-year pin; and an unidentified man speaking to the crowd.

13 Photos--Employee Recognition, Salesman of the Year, 1969

Photos taken at 1969 Salesman of the Year Banquet. Dent Baillio was named salesman of the year. The negatives are in Box 8, Folder 9.

14 Photos--Employee Recognition, Salesman of the Year, 1970

Photos taken at the 1970 Salesman of the Year Banquet. The negatives are in Box 8, Folder 9.

15 Photos-Employee Recognition, Service Awards, 1971

Proof sheet of photos of employees at work. The negatives are in Box 8, Folder 9.

16 Photos-Employee Recognition, Longview Service Awards, 1971

Photos taken at the 1971 Longview branch service awards ceremony. The negatives are in Box 8, Folder 9.

17 Photos-Employee Recognition, VIP, n.d. and 2000-01

Group photos of VIP honorees, five different groups, only the 2000-01 photo has a date on it. Also, proof sheets of the 2000-01 group visiting Morton Distribution Center. The negatives are in Box 8, Folder 4.

18 Photos-Secretaries-Darr

Portraits of Darr secretaries, primarily from the Dallas office, c. 1960s. The negatives are in Box 8, Folder 5.

19 Photos-Secretaries-Darr

Portraits of Darr secretaries, primarily from the Dallas office, c. 1960s. The negative are in Box 8, Folder 5.

20 Photos-Secretaries-Darr

Proof sheets of portraits of the Darr secretaries, c. 1960s. The negatives are in Box 8, Folder 5.

21 Photos-Softball Team, n.d.

Includes game action shots, team photos, and proof sheets of the photos, c. early 1970s. The negatives are in Box 8, Folder 6.

22 Photos-Bowling Team, n.d.

Team photo and an individual photo, c. 1960s.

23 Photos-Healthfair, n.d.

Photos and proof sheets of employees being inoculated. The negatives are in Box 8, Folder 7.

24 Photos-Caricatures of Company Officers, n.d.

Photos of caricatures of Darr company officers. The caricatures were used in a slide show for prospective machinery purchasers entitled "Profitability." The negatives are in Box 8, Folder 8.

25 Photos-Presbyterian Hospital, n.d.

Proof sheet of equipment at construction site at Presbyterian hospital. The negatives are in Box 8, Folder 9.

26 Photos--Darr Officers, n.d.

Portraits of Randy Engstrom and Arnold Martin.

27 Photos--Model Tractors, n.d.

Photos of models of Caterpillar tractors used in a Corps of Engineers display.

28 Photos--Darr Headquarters Office Interior, 1955
Photos of the interior of the Darr offices in Irving.

29 Photos--Wichita Falls Location, 1976
Proof sheets of photos taken at the renovated Wichita Falls branch. The negatives are in Box 8, Folder 9.

Box 8

1 Negatives, ConExpo '69

2 Negatives, Customer Trip #1, 1971

3 Negatives, Customer Trip #3, n.d.

4 Negatives, VIP Trip, 2001

5 Negatives, Dallas Office Secretaries, c.1960s

6 Negatives, Darr Softball Team, n.d.

7 Negatives, Healthfare, n.d.

8 Negatives, Caricatures of Darr officers

9 Negatives: Customer Trip #2, n.d.; Phoenix Seminar, 1970; Salesman of the Year Award, 1969; Salesman of the Year Award, 1970; Service Awards, 1971; Longview Service Awards, 1971; Presbyterian Hospital, n.d.; Wichita Falls Opening, 1976; Darr bowling team, n.d.; unidentified negatives, n.d.

10 Slides-Presentation "This is Darr"

Contains slides removed from a slide carousel and a script that was with the slides. The script is entitled "This is Darr." The slides were placed in sleeves and were kept in the original order.

11 Slides--Locations, Personnel, Equipment, n.d.

Contains slides of the various Darr locations, employees at the locations, and different pieces of equipment.

12 Slides--Locations, Personnel, Equipment, n.d.

Contains slides of the various Darr locations, employees at the locations, and different pieces of equipment.

13 Slides--Locations, Personnel, Equipment, n.d.

Contains slides of the various Darr locations, employees at the locations, and different pieces of equipment.

14 Slides--Tulsa, n.d.

Contains slides that were removed from a plastic slide box labeled "Tulsa." They are slides

of the location, employees, and equipment.

15 Slides--“Darr Difference,” n.d.

Contains slides that were removed from a plastic slide box labeled “Darr Difference,” a slide presentation.

16 Slides--“Darr Difference,” n.d.

Contains slides that were removed from a plastic slide box labeled “Darr Difference,” a slide presentation.

17 Slides--Oklahoma City, n.d.

Contains slides that were removed from a plastic slide box labeled “OKC.” They are slides of the location, employees, and equipment.

18 Slides--Dallas, n.d.

Contains slides that were removed from a plastic slide box labeled “Dallas.” The slides are primarily of personnel.

19 Slides--Unmarked, n.d.

Contains slides that were removed from an unlabeled plastic slide box. The slides are of personnel.

Series VI. Artifacts

Box 9

Contains oversize picture postcards of the Darr Irving shop from the 1950s; Darr decals; Darr matchbooks; a Darr Equipment Co. PartStore CD ROM; and Caterpillar Nascar placards.

Also contains six decks of Darr playing cards, a small Darr desk clock engraved 1954-2002; a new employee orientation apron; Darr letterhead; two plastic Darr shopping bags.

The box also contains three salesman’s parts and prices handbooks from 1929, 1964, and 1974.

Box 10

Contains six Darr Equipment Co. caps: two black and yellow “Team Darr, SCA Performance Specialists” caps; two maroon and beige Darr 45th anniversary caps; two black and beige Darr Equipment Co. caps.

Irving Archives Oversize Box 4

A Caterpillar Inc. advertisement from The Saturday Evening Post, January 10, 1931, and a second Caterpillar ad from an unidentified and undated magazine. The style of the second ad is similar to the ad in the 1931 Saturday Evening Post.

Archives Artifact Box 1

A model Caterpillar tractor mounted on a trophy base. The plaques on the base are not inscribed.